



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Transport and Resources Committee, Report

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (11.40 am): I rise to make a brief contribution on report No. 10 of the Transport and Resources Committee. First of all, I want people to understand why we have estimates and then I will comment on it.

Ms Boyd: Oh please.

Mr WATTS: While the member for Pine Rivers might want to interject with 'Oh please', maybe the member for Pine Rivers should listen up and then she would understand what her job is in this place.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order! Member for Toowoomba North, you will direct your comments through the chair, please.

Mr WATTS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I appreciate your comments.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Toowoomba North, do not reflect on the chair, please.

Mr WATTS: The key purpose is for the executive to explain to the rest of the parliament what they are doing and for the rest of the parliament to analyse what they have done with the money, what they have done with their policies and what has happened. What I find fascinating is the process. Once we get into the room a ministerial statement is read, which is great and we appreciate that. Then we get to ask some questions. Our chair did a good job of making sure he was fair and balanced. To be honest, our questions were answered well for the most part.

However, what is frustrating in the process is that we then get Dorothy Dixter questions to which the minister reads the answers. That is just a waste of the parliament's time. It is a charade that we do not need to have. It is not analysing anything. The minister knows the question is coming. He reads the answer that was typed up prior to the preparation of the question. It is a complete and utter waste of everybody's time. Not only is the public frustrated by that charade; they become very despondent about whether the government is actually open, transparent and accountable.

There were a few questions that I would have liked to have asked if only we had more time and were not listening to more and more ministerial statements in answer to Dorothy Dixter questions. One of my questions would have been: could Acland get approval? There is nothing stopping the government from approving the Acland coalmine and giving people back those jobs, which would give

the economy just to the west of me a massive and significant boost. Coalmines have been opened up in other parts of the country but clearly they do not influence the Green voters of Brisbane, or their preferences, in quite the same way. I ask the minister to look at that.

I would have liked to ask the transport minister more particularly about passenger rail. I asked a question about passenger rail. The federal government has given several million dollars for an investigation. The people of Toowoomba are desperate for a public transport option such as used to exist back in the sixties. You used to be able to catch a train from Toowoomba to Brisbane. Now you can do it only once a week. Railmotors used to run in our area. There is a great opportunity to pull ourselves forward, out of the late 1800s when the railway line was built, and upgrade it just a fraction. After 150-odd years maybe the minister could invest some money in a tunnel for inland rail and passenger rail could possibly be put on that line. It might be a revelation to him, but the people of Toowoomba have been calling for that for about 100 years. Hopefully, he will be listening.

Inland rail needs to be built. We need to make sure that the minister and all the wheels of government are very comfortable in saying, 'Okay, we've done the investigation, we've done all these things, it is all approved and it just needs to be built.' The feds have put the money on the table. I do not really care how it arrives at the Brisbane port. We need to trust the experts and the engineers. We just need to get on with building that project.

In my electorate the tunnel will go right near Boundary Street. We have asked several questions about this. Boundary Street could be connected with Old Goombungee Road to give connectivity to the people of Highfields and Wilsonton into the future, stopping the massive congestion that we see on the New England Highway as we come into town. That is an obvious project. We should be securing the corridor, we should be doing the business plan and we should be making sure that we protect those kinds of sites for the future.

Those are just a couple of issues but, again, time is short because we all know that this parliament operates under a guillotine so that the dictatorship opposite can rule without any transparency and without any accountability. The things that are missing in this parliament are transparency and accountability. We need to make sure that things such as the estimates hearings function much better for the people of Queensland.